

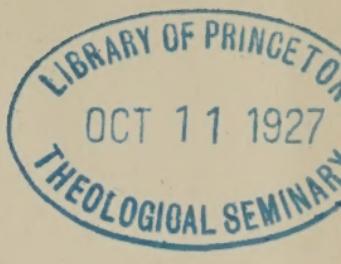
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The Great Companion





# The Great Companion





# The Great Companion

Lyman Abbott

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The ETERNAL is no Simulacrum ;  
God is not only There, but Here or no-  
where, in that life-breath of thine, in that  
act and thought of thine, — and thou  
wert wise to look to it.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and  
Spirit with Spirit can meet —  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer  
than hands and feet.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

Our God is never so far off  
As even to be near.

FREDERICK W. FABER.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they  
shall see God.”



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# THE LIVING GOD



# I

## THE LIVING GOD

ONE of the most pathetic passages in modern literature is Professor Clifford's lament: "We have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven to light up a soulless earth; we have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion is dead. Our children, it may be hoped, will know that sorrow only by the reflex light of a wondering compassion."

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To say that the Great Companion is dead, is not to say that there is no God. The dead also live; but between them and ourselves all communion and companionship seem to most of us impossible. So to many in our own time, to many without the Church, to some within it, living companionship with a living God is an experience unknown. They believe in what Carlyle calls a "hypothetical God," but he is to them only a hypothesis. They look back through the ages for some evidence of a God who revealed himself centuries ago; they look forward with anticipation to a God who will reveal

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himself in some future epiphany ; but of a God here and now, a God who is a perpetual presence, a God whom they can see as Abraham saw him, with whom they can talk as Moses talked with him, who will inspire them with courage as he inspired Gideon, with hope as he inspired Isaiah, and with praise as he inspired David, they do not know. “Our fellowship is with the Father; and with his son Jesus Christ,” are to them sacred words, but they do not express a real experience. “I will not leave you orphans,” says Christ. There are a great many orphan Christians to whom the Father is a vague tradi-

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tion or a scarcely less vague hope; but not a living presence.

It is because I believe that God is the Great Companion, that we are not left orphans, that we may have comradeship with him, that I have written these pages. Not to demonstrate any truth, but to give expression to a living, inspiring, dominating faith.

# THE QUEST AFTER GOD



## II

### THE QUEST AFTER GOD

THE lament of Professor Clifford is itself a witness to the truth that the spirit of man longs for fellowship with God. Whether we know it or not, we are all in a quest after the Great Companion. All study, all art, all music, all literature, all government, all industry are in essence a search after the Infinite. This is science—not the bringing together of phenomena

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that were before dispersed and scattered, but the finding out what is the unity in phenomena that makes them all part of the one great whole. This is art. The artist does not really create; he discovers. Behind all forms of beauty there is an infinite unity, and this unity, this intrinsic and eternal beauty, the artist is seeking to discern and to make others discern. So with the musician. See him try to bring out from the piano that which he has heard in his spirit. See him try first one chord and then another, crying at last, "Eureka! I have found it!" What is this man doing? He is searching after

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a harmony already existing. He has not created it. He has brought it out of the inaudible into the audible, out of the immaterial into the material.

As of study, so of life; every man's life is, consciously or unconsciously, a quest for the infinite and the eternal reality. What is the doctor doing but endeavoring to ascertain what are the laws of health? He does not make them; he finds them. What is the lawyer doing? If he be a true lawyer, he is endeavoring to find out what are the laws of justice. He does not create them. They are; they always were; they always will be.

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The courts may disregard, the legislature may violate them, but they reassert themselves. And the lawyer and the statesman are endeavoring to find out what are these moral laws which are as true as the physical laws, and which they can as little create as the scientist can create the physical laws.

The farmer and the manufacturer also are working with God; they also are trying to find out the divine laws that lie back of nature. They are working with God, whether they know it or not, in transforming useless material into useful material, in lifting up from the lower to the higher; they also are engaged

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in the divine pursuit, they also are really in the quest after God and God's way of working in the world.

In the deeper experiences of the soul we grow into the consciousness of what we are doing. When sorrow comes, and the child or the husband or the friend is rapt away from our vision as Elijah was from Elisha's as in a chariot of fire, and the minister and the friends cannot comfort, then the cry of the heart before uninterpreted becomes vocal, and we cry out, "O that I knew where I might find him!" Sooner or later to every man comes the consciousness of this quest; sooner or later to every man the

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hungering desire to know a stronger and better friend than any earthly friend, a wiser and truer justice than earthly justice, a larger and diviner life than the terrestrial life.

It is wholly idle to attempt to stop this quest by saying it is a useless one. The agnostic may tell us: "I have searched everywhere for God and I cannot find him. We cannot know what we cannot see, and as we cannot see God, we cannot know him. Stop looking for him." He has been saying that for a great many years; and still the world goes on with its quest. Agnosticism has done the Church a good service; for it has

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taught us the folly of dogmatism; it has taught us that there are no scales in which we can weigh God, no phrenological chart possible of him, that at best we know in part and we prophesy in part; but agnosticism cannot stop the soul's quest after God. Still the scientist will seek for the One Energy behind all energies; still the manufacturer will seek new forth-puttings of God's power in new combinations of matter and new uses of what he calls natural forces; still the lawyer and the statesman will seek new revelations of the Eternal Law-giver in new applications of his immutable justice to the changing

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conditions of society ; still the artist and the musician will search all the realm of visible and invisible art, of audible and inaudible sounds for some new phase of the Infinite and Eternal Beauty.

No statements about God can satisfy the soul in this its quest after God. Nothing can take the place of the personal finding of him; personal communion with him; personal fellowship with him. Authority can do something for us; but there are things which it can never do—whether it be authority of creed, or of Church, or of Bible. Authority may convince us that the music of Beethoven is better than

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the music of Sankey, and we may accept the statement because it is made by a musical expert. But the expert's statement will not give us a thrill of joy in the music of Beethoven's symphonies. Every one must himself receive and hear the message of Beethoven. An expert may tell us that the poetry of Browning is better than the poetry common in our daily newspapers, and we may believe it because he is an expert; but his testimony will not give the reader the thrill of life that Browning can give to one who appreciates him. The Bible may tell the devout reader that God lived in the world nineteen cen-

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turies ago, and he may believe it; but that will not give the life that God gives. The Church may tell the devout churchman that God is in his Church, and he may believe it; but that will not give the life that God gives.

Nothing can satisfy the quest after God except God himself. We must come to know him as Abraham knew him, as David knew him, as Isaiah knew him, as Paul knew him, or our quest will never be satisfied. “O that I knew where I might find him!” is the cry of humanity, and only God himself can satisfy it. And he does satisfy it. The soul can find God.

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How did Isaac know God? he had no visions. Or Joseph? did he know him only by dreaming about him? Or Moses, before he met him face to face in Sinai? did he before that time only imagine a Creator? and if so, what made him fancy that it was God who spoke to him at the burning bush? Or Samuel? was his sole knowledge derived from the mysterious Voice which called him from his bed in the Tabernacle? Or David? what made him suppose that Jehovah was his Shepherd, and led him beside still waters and in green pastures? Or the author of the Hundred-and-third Psalm? how came

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he to know that Jehovah forgave all his iniquities, healed all his diseases, redeemed his life from destruction, and crowned him with loving-kindness and tender mercies? Or Isaiah? how did he know that they who wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; shall mount up with wings as eagles; shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint?

The soul can know God, and know that God instructs, guides, forgives, redeems, strengthens, inspires the soul that trusts in him, exactly as Isaac and Moses and Samuel and David and Isaiah knew him and his helpfulness, and in no

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other way. The knowledge is just as vital and real, the intercommunion as actual, to-day as ever. The notions that there is no God, or that God cannot make himself known to men, or that he can be known only at second hand, either through a privileged hierarchy or an ancient literature, are all phases of the same general unbelief. The doctrine of the Bible is not that God once *was*, but that he ever is; not that man once knew him, but that men can always know him. Its doctrine is that God is in his world of nature and in his world of men, and that not to be able to see him is to be blind, and

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not to be able to talk to him is to be deaf and dumb.

This teaching of the Bible is also the teaching of the great dramatists. “There is,” says Victor Hugo, “a philosophy which denies the Infinite. There is also a philosophy, pathologically classified, which denies the seen; this philosophy is called blindness. To erect our lack of a sense into a source of truth is a fine blind man’s self-sufficiency.”

# THE HIDDEN PRESENCE



### III

#### THE HIDDEN PRESENCE

WE fail to find God because we do not look for him in the right place. We conceive of him as afar off, and coming at times in great displays of majesty and power to show himself to men, as he appeared in strange symbolic glory to Ezekiel in the land of the Chaldeans. But the Scripture writers represent him as in all the

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common places and in all the common experiences of mankind. We think of him as manifesting himself to a few elect souls who possess a genius for religion and a power of vision exceptional and rare; but the Scripture writers represent him as the God of all men, whatever their temperaments or their dispositions.

If there should be another destruction of the Cities of the Plain, with some angel visitant to interpret it to us; if again the waters of the sea should part for an Israel to go through as on dry ground, with the waves rising up on either side as a wall for their protection, we should believe in the divine presence. But

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the Scripture writers did not any less believe in God's presence in the commonest phenomena of nature. In truth, the commonest phenomena of nature are as great manifestations of his mysterious power and presence as those which impress us as unique. It does not need the convulsion of a Mount Pelée to bear witness to him. The springs that water the valleys, the grass that springs out of the earth, the perpetual transformation of mineral into vegetable, life-feeding products, the ordinary movement of the planets in their orbits—these also declare the glory of God and show his handiwork.

## *THE HIDDEN PRESENCE*

He sendeth forth springs into the  
valleys;

They run among the mountains :

They give drink to every beast of the  
field;

The wild asses quench their thirst.

By them the fowl of the heaven have  
their habitation.

They sing among the branches.

He watereth the mountains from his  
chambers :

The earth is satisfied with the fruit of  
thy works.

He causeth the grass to grow for the  
cattle,

And herb for the service of man ;

That he may bring forth food out of the  
earth :

And wine that maketh glad the heart of  
man,

## *THE HIDDEN PRESENCE*

And oil to make his face to shine,  
And bread that strengtheneth man's  
heart.

The trees of the Lord are satisfied ;  
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath  
planted ;

Where the birds make their nests :  
As for the stork, the fir trees are her  
house.

The high mountains are for the wild  
goats ;

The rocks are a refuge for the conies.

He appointed the moon for seasons :  
The sun knoweth his going down.

Thou makest darkness, and it is  
night ;

Wherein all the beasts of the forest do  
creep forth.

The young lions roar after their prey,  
And seek their meat from God.

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As he is in all the common phenomena of nature, so he is an inspiring, guiding, protecting, redeeming presence in all the experiences of men; not more the God of the poet or the prophet than of the shopman or the day-laborer. He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Abraham was a man of visions, who went out from his native land not knowing whither he went, seeking a God more spiritual than any which the land of his fathers had made known to him. God is the God of the men of imagination. Isaac was a commonplace man who saw no visions and dreamt no dreams, but who in an

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age of universal polygamy was faithful to one wife, and in an age of universal war sought peace and pursued it. God is the God of the commonplace man. Jacob was perhaps the meanest man of Old Testament history ; he began his life by driving a hard bargain with his brother in necessity ; then cheated his blind father on his death-bed ; then made his first prayer a bargain : “ If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God.” And God was his God, and, through

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long years of disciplining sorrow, conquered the meanness in him and delivered him from it, and brought him out, in his old age, into a peaceful and triumphant manhood. God is the God of even the mean and the despicable.

We are apt to imagine that God reveals himself to men in certain set and sacred places, that we can find him only in the church, or in the closet, or on the mountain-top, or in the midst of the tempest. But God, who came to Isaiah in the temple, came also to Moses while in exile, and to Gideon while in hiding he was threshing wheat by the wine-press, and to David while

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as a ruddy-faced boy he was keeping his father's sheep on the hillsides of southern Judea, and to Paul inspired by a ruthless conscience and with murderous intent. What Jacob said when he awoke from his dream of the celestial ladder to find his head pillow'd on the stones, we might all of us say, at all times—“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.”

As he is in the common places of life, so he speaks to us in our common experiences. We have an idea that only the extraordinary, the uplifting, the celestial movements of our mind are divinely inspired; but this was not the conception of

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the sacred writers. The secret and source of all life is God ; he is over all and in all ; in him we live and move and have our being. All human activities of every kind have the source of their power in the infinite and the eternal. A striking illustration of this conception of the Biblical writers, of God as the source and inspiration of all the commonest operations of the mind, is furnished by the Plowman's Ode :

Listen, and hear ye my voice,  
Attend, and hear ye my speech.  
Is the plowman never done with his  
plowing,  
With the opening and harrowing of  
ground ?

## *THE HIDDEN PRESENCE*

Does he not, when its surface is leveled,  
Scatter fennel, and sow cummin  
broadcast?

And duly set wheat there, and barley,  
And for its border plant spelt?

It is Jehovah who has taught these right  
courses,

It is his God who has trained him.

We do not thresh fennel with sledges,  
Nor are cart-wheels rolled over  
cummin,

But fennel is threshed with a staff,  
And cummin is threshed with a rod.

Do we ever crush bread-corn to pieces?  
Nay, the threshing goes not on  
forever,

But when over it cart-wheels are driven,  
Or sledges, our care is never to  
crush it.

## *THE HIDDEN PRESENCE*

This also from Jehovah proceeds —  
Wonderful counsel, great wisdom  
has he.<sup>1</sup>

Let us not, then, wait for the extraordinary to bring us the revelation of God's presence. We are to look for him not without but within. “Say not in thy heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down:) or, Who shall descend into the abyss? (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.” Every

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah xxviii. 23–29. Translation of T. K. Cheyne.

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voice of conscience summoning to virtue or restraining from vice, saying, Thou shalt, or Thou shalt not ; every regret for a misspent past, every sorrowful “ I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and I have done those things which I ought not to have done ” ; every inspiration to a higher, nobler, and better future, calling from the heights above, Follow thou me — yes, every incentive to generous or unselfish service and self-sacrifice for another, every impulse toward humanity, of pity for the sorrowing, or of mercy for the erring, is the voice of God speaking within us. Nay, more than that ;

## *THE HIDDEN PRESENCE*

all the common operations of our mind are, if we do but recognize it, witnesses to his presence from whom comes all our life, and by whom, if we will but allow it, all our life may be both guided and strengthened.

And every virtue we possess,  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness,  
Are his alone.

To commune with ourselves is to talk with God. If any one says this is a dangerous utterance, let him reframe it in the words of the Psalmist: “The Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in

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awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.” To be still and commune with our own heart is to commune with God. His is the still, small voice which we hear in the quiet of our own souls.



# THE POWER OF VISION



## IV

### THE POWER OF VISION

NOT every good man has within himself the consciousness of the divine presence. Some men walk by the light, without knowing the light by which they walk. To obey God, it is not necessary to see God. A soldier on the battle-field may receive the orders of his commander-in-chief filtered down to him through

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half a dozen intermediary commanders, and obey those orders loyally, without ever seeing the one from whom they come. On the other hand, he may see the one from whom they come, and be disloyal to him, as Lee was disloyal to Washington at the battle of Monmouth.

Not every devout soul is at all times equally conscious of the presence of God. That consciousness is obscured by other causes than sin: sorrow, perplexity, the enigma of life, physical infirmity, native temperament, mere weariness of the flesh, may serve to obscure it. Probably most honest souls have experi-

## *THE POWER OF VISION*

ences akin to agnosticism. Such an experience was that of Job:

Behold, I go forward, but he is not  
there;

And backward, but I cannot perceive  
him:

On the left hand, when he doth work,  
but I cannot behold him:

He hideth himself on the right hand,  
that I cannot see him.

But Job's agnosticism was like Professor Clifford's—sorrowful. The devout soul is never a self-complacent agnostic; he is never content not to know God. He never sings a Jubilate because the Great Companion is dead. In the absence of the Great Companion his soul

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cries out, more or less consciously: “O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!”

Even Jesus Christ knew temporarily this experience, in which the consciousness of the divine presence was obscured, and out of that experience cried: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

But because the Great Companion is not seen he is not therefore dead. He is the Universal Presence, though he is sometimes the Hidden Presence. And man has the power of vision, though he may not exercise it, or may seem wholly to lose it. For man is a

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child of God. This is what the sacred writer means by his declaration that "God created man in his own image." This is what Isaiah meant when he said: "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us. And this is what Paul meant when, speaking on Mars' Hill at Athens to a congregation of pagans, and quoting a pagan poet, he said: "We are also his offspring." Whether pagan or Christian, whether agnostic or believer, whether self-seeker or loyal servant, we have sprung from God. We are all kin to him. We so far share his nature as to be able to comprehend his will, receive his

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love, recognize his presence. Spiritually, man springs from God and partakes of the divine nature. He has a conscience which recognizes the difference between right and wrong, hope and aspiration which look to the future, faith which enables him to see the invisible world, love which binds him to his fellow-men and which should bind him to God. This is what is meant by the statement that man is by nature a son of God. He has come from God, and he possesses elements of the divine character in his reason, his conscience, his higher affections. True, he is an animal, and he has come from lower ani-

## *THE POWER OF VISION*

mals; but he is more than an animal. Whether this something in him which is more than animal has been developed from the lower animal nature, as Darwin and Drummond believe, or has at some epoch in the evolutionary process been implanted in him by the creative energy of God acting on him from without, is a question of philosophy, not of religion. However man has obtained this conscience and reverence, this faith and hope and love, he has them; they constitute his nature; they impose upon him obligations; they should be the supreme and dominant motives of his conduct.

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Like the Prodigal Son, man may wander away from God, but he cannot escape from himself, and therefore he cannot escape from the divine in himself. However far he wanders, however self-debased he may become, he is still one of God's children.

It is this fact which makes it possible for every man to know something of the divine life, which imposes on every man the obligation to have some spiritual acquaintance with the Father of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, or at least to seek for such acquaintance, and be dissatisfied until he attains it.

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But this experience, or God-consciousness, in the soul, is of various kinds and of every degree, from a mere heart-hunger to a supreme spiritual quietude. Religious literature is full of the reflections of this experience, but one need not go out of the Bible to find illustrations of almost every phase of it. Sometimes the experience is one of longing for him—"O that I knew where I might find him"; sometimes it is a heart-hunger for him—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God"; sometimes it is a new sense of his holiness and of the worth of his companionship pro-

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duced by a consciousness of sin committed—"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"; sometimes it is a sense of gladness and of gratitude in his favor—"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"; sometimes it is a supreme sense of his protecting presence—"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust"; sometimes it is simply an assurance of peace in him—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee"; sometimes it is a recognition of strength derived from him—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew

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their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” But in all these and kindred passages the testimony is uniform—the testimony of souls to their own experience of God, distant or near, desired or found, guiding, or guarding, or rebuking, or consoling, or pardoning, or life-giving.

This experience of God in fellowship with man is all summed up in the counsel of Christ to his disciples: “When ye pray, say, Father.” This is what the Master seems to say: Recognize him as your law-giver, your provider, your counselor,

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your constant companion, your most intimate personal friend. This is something very different from merely believing that there is *a* God. To prove to a man that there is *a* God is of very little use, if he is going on to live as though there were none. Belief that there is a God is valuable only as it grows out of an experience of companionship with him or longing for him. It is better to obey the voice of God and not know that it is his voice than to know that it is his voice and not obey it. To be absent from home and wish for the Father is more filial than to live at home and not care for the Father. If I am

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not sure whether God is or not, what shall I do? Assume as a hypothesis that Christ may be right: go to the Father whom you do not know, and get acquainted with him by going to him. Say, "Father."



# PURSUING GOD



# V

## PURSUING GOD

IT is a common mistake, but a great mistake, to imagine that the saints have reached their experience of God easily. No doubt there are differences in temperament: to some God-consciousness is an inherited gift, while by others it is acquired. It may even be that there are some who all their life long must go without this consciousness, or with it only as a

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vague and not understood experience, loyal to a God they do not know—or, let us say, loyal to truth and righteousness rather than to the God of truth and righteousness.

But there are abundant evidences that the sacred writers did not ordinarily come instantly and easily into the experience of fellowship with God. Once, in the woods, I watched a moth emerge from the chrysalis. He struggled slowly out. When through the open door of his prison-house he had partially emerged, he was still bound round with silken cords, from which with difficulty he emancipated himself before he took wing and flew into

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the realm of his newly bestowed liberty. So, from the chrysalis of our animal state, the spirit emerges into the freedom of the sons of God. The door of man's prison-house is opened for him, but he must find the exit, disentangle himself from the cords which bind him, and use his own newly acquired wings himself. The experiences of the sacred writers, as they are recorded in the Bible, abundantly illustrate the saying of Christ : “ Every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” If we are to have this experience of fellowship with the

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Great Companion, we must ask, seek, knock. What invitation could be freer than that which is contained in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, “He that will, let him take the water of life freely.” Yes; but he must have the will, and he must exercise it. It is by the exercise of this will that he takes the gift so freely proffered to him.

We read, for instance, such a triumphant utterance as this of Paul’s, and imagine that it expresses a kind of divine experience miraculously bestowed upon him: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,

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nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Yet if we would but reflect a little, we should be sure that he never could have written these words if he had not felt death, and life, and angels, and principalities, and powers, and things present, and things to come, and height, and depth, all pulling at him to separate him from the love of God. This shout of victory is itself a demonstration of the battle which preceded it. We do not even need to turn back and read the seventh chapter of Romans, to know that

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through some such experience as is there recorded Paul must have passed, or he never could have written the last verses of the eighth chapter.

There is perhaps in all literature no more splendid illustration of victorious faith than that furnished by the last three verses of the prophecy of Habakkuk ; but when we read those verses we are apt to forget that there are few more striking expressions of a despairing skepticism than are found in the first three verses of the same book. Let the reader compare them :

O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? I cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save.

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Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and look upon perverseness? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there is strife, and contention riseth up. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgement doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore judgement goeth forth perverted.

For though the fig tree shall not blossom,  
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;  
The labour of the olive shall fail,  
And the fields shall yield no meat;  
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,  
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:  
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.  
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,  
And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
And will make me to walk upon mine  
high places.

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Let us not, then, imagine that fellowship with God comes to men unsought. Few of the sacred writers afford a more striking illustration of such fellowship than Paul; and Paul, looking back upon his life, says of it: “I have fought a good fight.” If there are many Christians who think that the kingdom of God can only come “with observation,” and who do not look within themselves for its appearing, there are also many who think it should immediately appear, and who have never pondered the meaning of the words, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

# **LISTENING TO GOD**



## VI

### LISTENING TO GOD

IF God is to be to us the Great Companion, we must form the habit of listening to God. Prayer is something else than talking to God. It is something else than asking things of him which we expect to receive. I have heard prayer compared to a draft on a bank, which the holder presents, expecting to receive the money upon it. This is a very inadequate and

## *LISTENING TO GOD*

unsatisfying interpretation of prayer. Prayer is communion with God. It is the intermingling of our life with his life. It involves listening to him as well as speaking to him. The answer to prayer is furnished not in things given, but in life imparted, in fellowship enjoyed, in counsel received, in uplifting, inspiring, life-giving influence. Prayer is living in the conscious presence of God.

Prayer is carrying to God our sins, and receiving forgiveness; our sorrows, and receiving his comfort; our weakness, and receiving his power. In prayer is the secret of that indefinable spiritual life which

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defies definition, description, interpretation, which can be felt by the possessor, the effect of which can be seen in his character, the nature of which cannot be explained by philosophy. "Spiritual power," says Canon Liddon, "may be felt rather than described or analyzed. . . . It is an unearthly beauty, whose native home is in a higher world, yet which tarries among men from age to age, since the time when the Son of God left us his example and gave us his Spirit. It is nothing else than his spiritual presence, mantling upon his servants; they live in him; they lose in him something of their proper personality; they are absorbed into,

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they are transfigured by, a life altogether higher than their own; his voice blends with theirs; his eye seems to lighten theirs with its sweetness and its penetration; his hand gives gentleness and decision to their acts; his heart communicates a ray of its divine charity to their life of narrower and more stagnant affection; his soul commingles with theirs, and their life of thought and feeling and resolve is irradiated and braced by his."

If the soul is to receive this communicated life, it must learn how to be passive as well as active, recipient as well as forth-putting; it must learn to listen as well as to speak.

## *LISTENING TO GOD*

Savonarola has said that we are so busy praying to God that we have no time to listen to him. It may be doubtful whether in our time this sentence, even for devout souls, would not have to be changed into: We are so busy working for God that we have no time to listen to him. But it is a mistake to be always doing. If it is true that the disciples could not be permitted to build three tabernacles and remain on the Mount of Transfiguration, always enjoying the glow and glory of the vision, it is also true that they could not have cured the boy in the valley below possessed of an evil spirit unless they had been in the

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Mount of Transfiguration. If we are to be workers for God, we must also be workers with God.

The peril of our time lies not in the fact—if it is a fact—that men attend church less than they used to, or that family prayers is a less common practice than it once was. These facts are but symptoms. “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.” One cannot but wonder whether this entering into the closet, shutting the door, praying to the Father which is in secret, and listening for his secret response, is a common experience of the twentieth-century Christian.

## *LISTENING TO GOD*

What do I mean by listening to God? I mean what the Psalmist meant when he said, "Be still and know that I am God"; when he said, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." I mean the endeavor to come into a consciousness of that divine presence, consider the problems of our life, the questions of our duty, the possibility of our service, and then, while we consider these as in his presence, waiting for the impulse that shall guide and the will that shall determine. In such a sacred hour the lower motives fall away, they lose their propelling power, and the higher and the diviner pur-

## *LISTENING TO GOD*

poses come into play and assume their rightful authority.

To pray is not to seek his alliance in our work, his strength for the accomplishment of our will; it is first of all to make our will tributary to his will, and ourselves sharers in his work. Therefore it is that the Master, in that prayer which he has given us, and which ought not to be a form but rather the secret and illustration of a spirit, bids us make our first petition, the very entrance door into the room of prayer, “Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” If one has not come into this spirit,

## *LISTENING TO GOD*

he has not come into the spirit of prayer at all. If he has come into this spirit, he will wish to know what the Father's will is, and what he himself can do to hallow the Father's name and hasten the Father's kingdom.

To pray to God is to listen to God, and his voice is to be listened for in the impulses of our own souls, which come to us in those secret hours in which his presence excludes from our consciousness all other presences.



# THE DOOR



## VII

### THE DOOR

DO I substitute the mystical experience of God within the soul for faith in Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh which dwelt among us, in whom we may behold the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father? No. But neither do I substitute this faith in Jesus Christ as the Word made flesh, in whom we may behold the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, for an

## *THE DOOR*

inward and mystical experience of God in our own souls. Jesus Christ has not come into the world to serve as a substitute for the knowledge of God. He has come into the world to give the world knowledge of God. He has come that he might give eternal life to as many as God has given him; and this, he says, is life eternal, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

We are not to know Jesus Christ instead of knowing the only true God; we are to know the only true God through Jesus Christ. By Christ's fellowship with the Father,

## *THE DOOR*

and our fellowship with Christ, we are to come into fellowship with the Father. Christ has lived, taught, suffered, and died that the hidden Presence might no longer be hidden to us; that we might better understand and have diviner intimacy with the Great Companion.

I have been often asked to define my faith in Jesus Christ, and have often endeavored to do so. Let me make that endeavor once more here, not in the terms of theological science, but in those of spiritual experience.

If God is in universal humanity, adumbrated by our ignorance, his presence obscured and his person

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distorted by our imperfections and by our sins, why may we not believe that he was in one typical man, in whom his presence was not adumbrated by ignorance, nor his person obscured or perverted by sin? We have looked into the clouds, into the flowers, into the lakes, into the mountains, and we have seen his handiwork and been sure that he was behind it all. We have looked in history, and in its great currents and its great events we have seen his handiwork and been sure that he was working out his divine design. We have stood upon the nether side of history, and we have seen the pattern of righteousness and liberty

## *THE DOOR*

and justice slowly growing, and we have been sure there was some one on the other side, though we could not see him; he was a hidden workman. But now some of us believe that we can find the hand that does this work. We have a personified God.

Nineteen centuries ago there appeared a man in the little province of Palestine. He lived a quiet, humble life. He loved and served and suffered, and drew men to him by his love and his service and his sacrifice. After his death there grew up an assurance among his disciples that he had risen from the dead; and the conviction laid hold upon

## *THE DOOR*

them, and they believed it with all their hearts, that this man who had so loved with this great love was the revelation of God's grace; that he was full of grace and truth; that in him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; that he was the reflection of God's glory, the revelation of God's love, the express image of God's person. Their belief in his resurrection was more than belief in a great historic fact: it was belief that death had no dominion over him; that he liveth and reigneth evermore; that he who was with his disciples in the flesh in Palestine is with his disciples in the spirit in all history. To his presence his fol-

## *THE DOOR*

lowers attribute the power and glory of that great historic movement which we call Christianity. Christ never built a house, but more splendid edifices have been built to his memory than to all other names put together in the world's history. He never wrote a line of music, but he has inspired more music than any other man. He never painted a picture, but painting was born in his birth. He wrote no great books, but he inspired the most splendid literature the world has seen. He wrought no specific reform, but wherever his cross has gone slavery has been abolished, war has been ameliorated, and pestilence has dis-

## *THE DOOR*

appeared. The Christian looks back through this ever-increasing illumination and sees in the far-off century the Star from which it comes, and believes that in him he gets the answer to the cry, “O that I knew where I might find him!”

I do not mean to enter into the hot debates respecting the person and character and work of Jesus Christ. They are unutterably offensive. Men have fought over his cross until the smoke of their cannon has obscured the vision of his life and death from their eyes. I will have none of it. I will not debate. Let me only say I believe that God was in Christ; that Christ was God

## *THE DOOR*

manifest in the flesh. He is the highest and supremest manifestation of this unknown God possible in a single human life. What Christ was, God is; coming into every sorrowing household with the message, “Thy brother shall rise again”; coming to every Pharisee with the warning, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses and for a pretence make long prayer”; coming to every despairing sinner with the words, “Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee.”

For what purpose did the Son of God come into the world, living, teaching, suffering, dying? He said

## *THE DOOR*

of himself, "I am the door." We stop for a few moments at the bronze doors of the Baptistry in Florence to admire their art; then we pass through the door and go in. A door is not merely to be admired; it is an entranceway. Christ is the door by which we enter in unto God; he is the door by which God enters in unto us. "No man," he says, "cometh unto the Father but by me." This is not because God has shut up all other doors of entrance to him, allowing us but one. It is because the Infinite can manifest himself to the finite only in one way--by becoming, as it were, finite. He can manifest himself to

## *THE DOOR*

humanity only in one way, namely, in the terms of a human experience.

This is the significance of the resurrection of Christ. The mere fact that a man died in the first century and rose again from the dead would not of itself greatly concern us. It is not a matter of vital concern whether Lazarus rose from the dead or not. But it is a matter of vital concern if we have in Christ Jesus a Master who could not die; who, having apparently died, came back again with visible witness to his own disciples, that we might know that he lives to-day as truly in every American town as

## *THE DOOR*

he ever did in Nazareth—as truly by our side as he ever was by the side of James and John.

“O that I knew where I might find him!” Look about: he is in all the phenomena of life. Look back: he is in the one incomparable Son of God. Look within: he is in every noble discontent, in every inspiring aspiration. We need not ascend up into the heavens to bring him down. We need not go down into the depths to bring him up. He is in the hearts of all who truly desire him.

“O that I knew where I might find him!” We can find him in the Infinite and Eternal Energy

## *THE DOOR*

from which all things proceed. We can find him in “the Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness,” which is building up out of history a kingdom of truth and purity and liberty and justice. We can find him in the one transcendent figure in human history manifesting the Divine Spirit because manifesting the infinite and unquenchable love. We can find him in the spirit in our own hearts, of truth and purity and goodness, which we miscall our better nature, but which is in reality God’s own voice, God’s own presence, God’s own spirit, speaking to us and working in us—“never so far as even to be near,”

## *THE DOOR*

“closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.”

“If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.”

# CHRIST'S YOKE



## VIII

### CHRIST'S YOKE

C  
OMRADESHIP with God is the secret, not only of joy and peace, but of efficiency. In that comradeship we find rest, not from our work, but in our work. When Christ says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,” he does not invite us to lay aside our work. He offers us rest in our

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

work. The invitation is to those that are laboring and bearing burdens. The promise is to teach them how so to labor and how so to bear their burdens as not to be wearied by them. It is not a couch which he offers us, but a yoke; and a yoke is an instrument for the accomplishment of work.

A boy is tugging with his fingers at a stone embedded in the ground, in a vain endeavor to raise it up. A wiser companion stops him. "I will show you how to do that more easily," he says. And he takes a small stone from the roadside as a fulcrum, and a branch from a tree as a lever, and in a moment the

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

embedded stone is raised from its resting-place. In the same way Christ says to us, Come, and I will teach you how to reach great results with little labor.

The secret of all modern civilization is comradeship with God. A few years ago I visited a shop in Greece where exquisite silks were being woven. The beauty of the silk and the skill of the loom-handlers did not impress me so much as the fact that all the power by which the three or four looms in the room were worked was supplied by two or three poor, bent-backed laboring women turning a crank all day long. Modern science harnesses the rapids

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

above Niagara Falls to some turbine-wheels, and so sets them revolving electric dynamos which tap the electric currents that encircle the world; the transformed power of the rapids is carried to Buffalo and lights the city. Modern science is able to do this because it has learned how to do its work with God; to take the powers with which he has stored the world; to learn of him; to use his yoke.

For a yoke is not only an implement of industry: it is a symbol of comradeship. The yoke binds two together. To take Christ's yoke upon us is to be yoked to Christ. Work with me, says Christ, and

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

your work will be easy; work with me, and your burden will be light. This is what Paul means when he says, "I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me." We fail to recognize the spiritual forces in the world which are working for righteousness; we think *we* must conquer; we see how great are the forces against us; and we are dismayed. But he who has any experience of divine companionship learns the meaning of the saying, "One with God is a majority." Twelve Galilean peasants conquer pagan Rome. The martyrdom of Huss wins a victory for religious freedom. The Mayflower Pil-

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

grims are more than a match for the Stuarts.

It is worry, not work, that kills; and how can one who is doing God's work in companionship with God worry about results? Worry is distrust; worry is disbelief. Trust and faith forbid worry. Christ has given to us the secret of peace in the sentence, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid; ye have faith in God, have faith also in me." Faith in him means faith in a God who is in his world, who is working out the world's redemption, who is making of it in every generation a better world; whose resources are ample, whose

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

hopes are infinite, whose results are sure; who will not cease his work until the kingdom of God has come and the will of God is done on earth as in heaven.

One mother gives her sick child into the care of a professional nurse and goes off to the ball, dismissing the sick-chamber from her mind; a second sits by the side of her sick child, with anxiety written in her face and expressed in every motion of her body, until the doctor contrives how to send her from the room because she is adding to her child's restlessness; the third mother supplements the services of the professional nurse by the serene and

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placid temper which she brings into the sick-room. She yokes herself to God, and the doctor declares to himself, This mother is better medicine than any I can give. These are the three ways in which men take troubles. They forget them; they worry over them; they conquer them. By doing the work which God has given us to do and leaving the results to God, we conquer all forms of anxiety, care, and worry. The continual prayer, "Thy will be done," is the secret of a quiet mind. It was the secret of Christ's peace.

It is not our business to set the world right. It is our business to do what we can in our own little

## *CHRIST'S YOKE*

corner to set that little corner right. That was a wise teacher who, when one of his pupils came to him with anxious heart and fretted face because the boys' prayer-meeting did not go as he thought it ought to, replied to him, "God took care of the universe before you were born, and God can take care of the universe after you are dead." Let us be content to do our own work and let everything else go.

I do the little I can do,  
And leave the rest to God.



# THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT



## IX

### THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

“THE fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control.” How shall we get these fruits of the spirit? We cannot make them. Fruits that are made are artificial fruits; real fruits grow. “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all

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his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” Why not? Because they toil not, neither do they spin. Solomon’s glory was wrought with much toiling and spinning, and was put on him; the glory of the lily is developed spontaneously from within. How shall we get these fruits of the spirit? Certainly not by laboring for them. By just living in the spirit and letting the fruits grow. “What shall I do to be saved?” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Do what he bids you, and let him do the saving. What shall I do to get this fellowship with the Great Companion and the fruits of this fellowship? Follow

## *THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT*

Christ in your life, and leave him to bring to you the fellowship and its fruits.

Suppose that a patient, in going into a hospital, were to take her watch, her thermometer, and her hand-glass with her, and every hour were to measure her pulse-beat by her watch, and take her temperature with her thermometer, and look at her tongue in the hand-glass, and ask herself at each new self-examination whether her symptoms indicated grip, or typhoid, or malarial fever, or pneumonia, and what they indicated as to her condition, whether worse or better. She would not promote her recovery by the process,

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and certainly she would not promote her peace of mind. What the doctor wants of his patient is that she should not examine herself; that she should never try her pulse, or take her temperature, or look at her tongue; that she should never ask herself or him how she is getting along. The patient who forgets herself, asks no questions, leaves him to kill her or cure her as he will, while she simply obeys his directions without questioning,—in brief, who discharges herself of all responsibility and lets it rest upon him,—is the best patient and makes the best possible contribution to her own cure. The meaning of the parable

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is plain enough. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men, the physician of souls. Our business is simply to follow his directions, and never to ask ourselves how we are getting on; never to test our symptoms, or examine into our spiritual conditions, or ask ourselves whether we are getting better or worse. Spiritual self-examination almost inevitably produces spiritual hypochondria. “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” is as applicable to spiritual as to physical stature. It is not for us to save our own lives ; that is his business.. It is our business to do the work God has given us to do.

## *THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT*

When we turn aside from doing the work he has given us, in order to do his work, we get into trouble.

You want peace and righteousness. Which is it that you want—peace *or* righteousness? They are not identical. Christ did not always have peace; he did not have it in the temptation in the wilderness, nor in the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane; but he always had righteousness. It is a matter of little consequence whether you have peace or not, but it is a matter of the greatest consequence whether you are righteous. And you will never get peace by pursuing it; you will get it only by pursuing righteousness.

## *THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT*

Peace flees from those who pursue her; but those who pursue righteousness with singleness of purpose she steals up behind unexpectedly and folds in her embrace.

Forget yourself, and think only of your duty. Do what Christ bids you do, regardless of the question whether he gives you peace for doing it or not. Read the Sermon on the Mount, and then try to live it. “Let your light so shine.” Do you know, or can you find, any darkened home? Go into it and carry the illumination of a bright and cheery presence. “Love your enemies.” Do you know any one who has done you an ill turn? Study how

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you can do him a good turn. Give the whole of your mind to doing each hour the duty which lies next to you. And when the day is over, waste no time in an idle review to see whether you have done the duty well or not. Put your thoughts on the morrow, on the question what you can find to do to make some one happier and better for your being in the world. If you have peace, be glad of it. If you have no peace, go on just the same, resolved to show yourself, the world, and your Master how loyal you can be to your own life, to your fellow-men, and to him.

Is this substituting obedience to

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the law for acceptance of Christ? Is it a subtle form of legalism? No. The essence of legalism is doing work as a servant in order to earn a servant's wages. We are to accept Christ as a friend, and render him our service because we believe in him and love him. The way to comradeship with God is to do for God and with God the work which God has given us to do, and leave him to do in his own time and by his own methods the work which he has not given us to do. Making ourselves over is not a part of the work which he has given us to do. We cannot make ourselves over. The more we study our symptoms

*THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT*  
and meditate ourselves, the more miserable we are, and the less we have of his conscious companionship. The way to conscious fellowship with God is indicated by the Psalmist:

Search me, O God, and know my heart:  
Try me, and know my thoughts :  
And see if there be any way of wickedness in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.

Let God do the searching. Let God do the trying. Let God lead us into the experiences which will burn out the dross and purify the gold. The way to conscious fellowship with God is indicated by the

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apostle: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." If we are willing to go where he is willing to lead us, we need not fear that he will fail to make us over. If we will forget ourselves and put all our strength on running the race which he has set before us, we need not fear that we shall not eventually be crowned: and the crown is comradeship with God.



# DEVOUT FORGETTING



## X

### DEVOUT FORGETTING

WHEN we have lost comradeship with God by our own wilful wrong-doing, how shall we recover it? What shall we do with the follies, the faults, and the transgressions of the past? When our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us that he will not hear, how shall we regain our Great Companion?

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

Come, sit down here with me, and let us talk this over quite frankly.

You have sinned; you think, probably truthfully, that you have grievously sinned; you fear that you have sinned away the day of grace, as it is said; that you have committed the unpardonable sin; that there is for you no forgiveness. You are sorry for your sin; you repent of it. This does not merely mean that you are afraid of the consequences; that you would be glad to go on in sin if you were not afraid of the consequences. It means that the sin itself has become loathsome to you. You hate it;

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you want to get away from it, to be delivered from it, to come back into a state in which you can respect yourself, and in which others, however thoroughly they might know your inmost life or the secrets of your past life, could also respect you. But though you repent of your sin, though you loathe it and want to escape from it, you cannot think that you are forgiven. The reason you cannot think that you are forgiven is because you have no peace; you do not enjoy that consciousness of forgiveness of which you read in books of biography, or of which you have heard in sermons and in prayer-meeting expe-

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

riences. Sometimes you feel your sin and the isolation which it has produced very bitterly; sometimes you simply do not feel at all; you seem to yourself to be inert, dead, "past feeling," as the Bible says, and so you think that you are not and cannot be forgiven, and you know not what you can do.

The simple answer to all this is that you are making a great mistake; that you are looking for the effect to precede the cause. Peace is not the result of being forgiven; it is the result of believing that one is forgiven. You are expecting to believe that you are forgiven because you are at peace, but you can have

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

peace only when you believe that you are forgiven. You are to believe that you are forgiven, not because you experience any change of feeling, but because Christ declares that he forgives you. He declares that he will receive to the uttermost all those that come to him. His prophet declares that if the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, the Lord will have mercy upon him and will abundantly pardon him. You are to believe this, not because you have experienced the joy of pardon, but on the testimony of others — of the prophet, of the Bible, of

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

Christ, and of Christians in all ages of the world. Until you believe this, of course you cannot have peace, for peace is the result, not of being pardoned, but of believing that you are pardoned.

You carry to a prisoner the Governor's pardon and say to him, "You are free; the door is open; come out." "No," he replies; "if I were free, I should not be in this cell. When I am out of it, then I will believe that I am pardoned and that I am free." Like such a prisoner, you are pardoned if you are sick of the sin, whether you know you are pardoned or not. You are to go out of the cell because you

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

are free; you are not free because you have gone out of the cell.

But what of the past? The broken resolutions cannot be mended, the lost opportunities cannot be recovered, the cruel words cannot be taken back, the injuries inflicted cannot be repaired. What of the past?

I answer: Study yesterday in order to learn wisdom for tomorrow, but when the lesson has been learned study it no longer. We ought to learn wisdom from our mistakes; we ought to acquire virtues from our sins. Why this act of folly which we lament? Spend no time in repining; but

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spend all the time that is necessary in order to learn its lesson. Was it due to vanity? or greed? or appetite? or self-conceit? or a weak and wayward will? Find out. Then be on guard against the same enemy to your honor when he attacks you at a new point and under new circumstances. We all make mistakes; we all commit transgressions. But we ought not to repeat the same mistakes—that is to blunder; we ought not to commit the same transgressions—that is doubly dishonorable. Forget the things which are behind, and stretch forward to the things which are before. No man ought

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to carry the past as a prisoner carries the ball chained to his ankle. No man ought to allow the memory of the past to prevent his peace and joy in present fellowship with God. God declares that he buries our sins in the depths of the sea; it is not right nor wise for us to fish them up again and take a new inventory of them. He blots them out of the book of his remembrance; it is neither right nor wise for us to engrave them with pens of steel in the book of our remembrance. To do this is to disbelieve his word, distrust his forgiveness, refuse his comradeship. It is injurious to us, insulting to him. To

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

do this is for Peter to refuse to accept the bishopric proffered to him ; for John to refuse to rest his head on Christ's bosom because a few days before he has ambitiously sought the best place in Christ's kingdom ; for the Prodigal to reject the proffer of the robe and the festal board, because he has been prodigal. Not even our sins should exclude us from the comradeship of God, who delights to pardon iniquity.

The last time before his death that Peter looked on Jesus was as Jesus was being led out from the court of Caiaphas to Pilate's judgment-seat, and the oaths and

## *DEVOUT FORGETTING*

curses with which Peter was denying his Lord were still trembling on his lips. The first time after his resurrection that Peter saw Jesus was by the Galilean Sea, when the Master asked the disciple, Do you love me? as many times as the disciple had denied the Master. Christ recalled the past, burnt it in upon Peter's memory, probed his heart to the uttermost, despite the hurt of the probing. But he did it only that he might add emphasis to the instruction, "Feed my sheep." The only value of the backward look is as a preparation for a future life. It is well for us sometimes to number our days, but only "that

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we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” But when we have applied our hearts unto wisdom, when we have learned the lesson of the past, and learned it thoroughly, then we are to rise up and go about Christ’s business, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.”

The Great Companion is still our Companion, although we have sinned. That is the Gospel. He is what Jesus *was*, The Friend of sinners. He has taken the burden of our sins upon himself. We are to show our love and loyalty to him by allowing him to take that

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burden, without attempting to take it from him. Go out in Christ's spirit and take upon yourself the burden of others' sins, and let him take the burden of yours. You cannot alter the past: leave that to him; give yourself to the future. You cannot earn the remission of your sins: accept it as his free gift; then, inspired by gratitude and love to him, go forth to carry the remission of sins to others. This is the answer to the question, How shall we regain our Great Companion?



# DEVOUT REMEMBERING



## XI

### DEVOUT REMEMBERING

WE are to forget ourselves and remember God; we are to forget ourselves by remembering God; forget our perplexities by remembering his guidance; forget our failures and follies by remembering his deliverance of us; forget our sorrows by remembering the comfort he has given to us; forget our tears by remembering that he has wiped them away; forget our sins

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by remembering his forgiveness. Surely Mary and Martha did not keep alive the memory of that sad hour when Lazarus closed his eyes in death, and answered no more to their caresses; the memory of the moment when, answering to the call of Jesus, he came forth from his grave into the sunlight, must have erased the other picture from their thoughts. Surely Peter did not live over again the scene of his cowardly denials by the fire in the courtyard, surrounded by the jeering servants; the memory of that other scene when, by the quiet sea and in the early dawn, Christ gave him again his commission as apostle

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was the one on which his thoughts delighted to dwell.

Forgetting and remembering are results of the same mental operation. We remember when we fix our attention upon a past incident; we forget when we turn our attention away from it. In this, as in all our experiences, we are to overcome evil with good; we are to erase the pictures which dishearten, depress, and discourage us by substituting for them the pictures which hearten, encourage, and inspire; we are to forget our sorrows by remembering God's comfort; we are to forget our sins by remembering God's forgiveness. Our mind is more sub-

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ject to our will than we are apt to think. The memory is a gallery whose walls are covered with many pictures; we can choose what pictures we will look at. This is what Paul means when he bids us bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." It is always easier to turn our eyes from one picture to another than to close our eyes altogether. The easiest way to forget what is best forgotten is to remember what is best worth remembering. The easiest way to forget our own follies and failures and sins is to remember God's goodnesses.

'The involuntary consciousness of

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the divine Presence is the result of a voluntary attention to the effect of that Presence in our lives. If we wish that a sense of the Great Companion shall be always with us, we must fasten our attention upon those experiences which bear witness to his presence. This is the reason why the Bible lays so much stress on special remembrances of God. Attend, it seems to say, to his manifestations of himself in special experiences; so you will learn to realize that he is in all experiences. “Remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord redeemed thee.” “Remember the days of old, consider

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the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

"I call to remembrance my song in the night. . . . I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." "Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his face evermore. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done." This last verse interprets the others: it is by remembering his marvellous works that we seek his strength and his face. Remembrance of his past graciousness is the way to win the consciousness of his continual presence.

In this is the value of securing

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certain times and places for the special cultivation of our conscious fellowship with God. It is true that all places are holy places; that all times are sacred times; that God is in all our experiences. But it is also true that we shall not see him if we do not look for him, and that the mind is so subject to the law of association that we shall most easily see him in all places and at all times if we form a habit of looking for him in certain sacred places and at certain sacred times. It is doubtful if Ezekiel would have seen God in the desert, if he had not first seen him in the Temple. Even Christ had his special hours

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set apart to devotion. No man is so saintly that he can well dispense with aids to the devotional life which Christ found valuable, if not absolutely needful. This is the value of public worship. We go to church not for the sermon, or the music, or the prayers: we go for the atmosphere. When I am with a hundred devout men and women, who have in some measure a consciousness of the divine presence, or even a consciousness of their need of it, their vision gives vision to me, their imagination enkindles my imagination, their heart hunger awakens my heart hunger. This is the devotional value in

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sacred art. My grandchild has been making me a visit; and every morning we have taken him to the photograph of his mother, and he has spoken to the photograph: "Mamma." The picture has kept her in his remembrance. Doubtless, there is a danger lest the soul shall substitute the image for the reality, the crucifix for the Christ. Whether the danger outweighs the advantage, whether the Second Commandment is to be interpreted as forbidding all graven images or only all worship of graven images, I do not here discuss: for the object of these pages is not discussion, but exposition and interpretation.

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But I may remind my Roman Catholic readers that their own church forbids them to venerate the image, and bids them use the image never as a substitute for the living Person, but only to recall him ; and I may remind my Protestant readers that it may be less acceptable to Christ to forget him altogether than to recall him to our thoughts by means of a statuette or a picture. That we may rise above the use of sacred symbols I do not doubt; but no one can doubt that we may fall below it.

This is the value of those quiet hours which the night sometimes affords us. Insomnia has lost its

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dread since I learned the meaning of the Psalmist's declaration : "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." The man who spends his sleepless hours in such remembrance makes them joyful hours. He does not lie tossing to and fro, wondering whether he shall ever fall asleep again, anxious lest he shall prove unfitted for the morrow's duties, trying to put himself to sleep by endless combinations of numbers or by repeating senseless rhymes : he lies restfully and reads in the book of his remembrance the record of his Father's love, or

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looks calmly at the morrow's duties or the morrow's perils because he looks at them as through his Father's eyes, or communes with his own heart and in its uninterpretable experiences hears the voice of his Father, or simply is still and knows that God is God; and he finally falls to sleep as a child in his Father's arms, and wakes in the morning more refreshed by his hour of sleeplessness than by all that the hours of sleep have brought to him.

The Great Companion is not dead. He is not talking, nor pursuing, nor in a journey, nor sleeping and must be awakened. It is

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we who are talking, and pursuing, and in a journey, and sleeping and must be awakened. If we will stop our talking and listen, we may hear him ; if we will stop our pursuing after we know not what, we shall find him at our side ; if we will return from our journey into the far country, he will come forth to meet us ; if we will rouse ourselves at the voice of conscience, which every now and then pierces to our consciousness and disturbs our slumbers, we shall find ourselves in his presence. For still, as of old, is it true :

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there :

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If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou  
art there.

If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the  
sea ;

Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover  
me ;

Even the night shall be light about me.  
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee ;  
But the night shineth as the day :  
The darkness and the light are both  
alike to thee.

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